CASAE 8

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AUX
ANNALES DU SERVICE DES ANTIQUITÉS DE L'ÉGYPTE

CAHIER N° 8

ROCK INSCRIPTIONS IN THE HIJÂZ

A REPORT

BY

OSMAN R. ROSTEM

LE CAIRE
IMPRIMERIE DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

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INTRODUCTION.

Some authorities on Semitic languages have recently expressed their doubt about the existence of pre-Islamic inscriptions in the central Hijâz [1].

During my visits to that country in 1935 and 1936 I saw many inscriptions in various places. Thinking that they may be of interest to scholars of these languages I copied and photographed as many as I could. I was also able to procure from friends some copies and photos of inscriptions found in places I could not visit myself.

The object of this paper is to give all the material and all the information I was able to collect and thus show that inscriptions of pre-Islamic as well as of other periods can actually be found in the central Hijâz, and I hope that an expedition may be organised to go to those places and study the inscriptions in a learned and systematic way.

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[1] Wolfensohn, *History of Semitic Languages* (in Arabic), page 194; Littman, *Remark on above,* page 278, same work.

تاريخ اللغات السامية للدكتور اسرائيل ونفسون صحيفة ١٩٤ وتعليق الأستاذ ليتمان صحيفة ٢٧٨ من نفس المؤلف

Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs,* Cambridge 1930, pages xxii, 31, 102, 131, 138, in which he gives the impression that the Arabs, before Islam, did not practice the art of writing and that all the Semitic and Arabic inscriptions are found in the south and north of Arabia, but about Hijâz he says nothing.

There are two principal routes from the Red Sea to Al-Madîna. The shorter route is to land at Yanbuʿ (ينبع) and trek east to Al-Madîna, passing by a place called Al-Masajîd (المسجيد). The distance is about 250 kilometres. The other route is to land at Jidda (جده) and trek north to Al-Masajîd, where the two routes join and use the same track to Al-Madîna. The distance is about 450 kilometres. Mecca is 75 kilometres east of Jidda. There are several other routes which form a network joining these places together, but they are mostly used by caravans (see map). It was while travelling by the two principal routes that I first noticed the inscriptions cut on the rocks adjoining the tracks.

On my first journey (Feb. 1935) I took the shorter route and saw many inscriptions of different kinds. While waiting for the boat at Yanbuʿ on my return journey, I heard that at Yanbuʿ El-Nakhl (ينبع النخل), a place 40 kilometres east of Yanbuʿ, inscriptions are found on many rocks scattered among the hills. A photograph (pl. V *a*) was given to me. It represents a stone with apparently Thamudian letters on it. Later, on my request, more photographs of inscriptions in that place were made and sent to me. (Pls. V, VI).

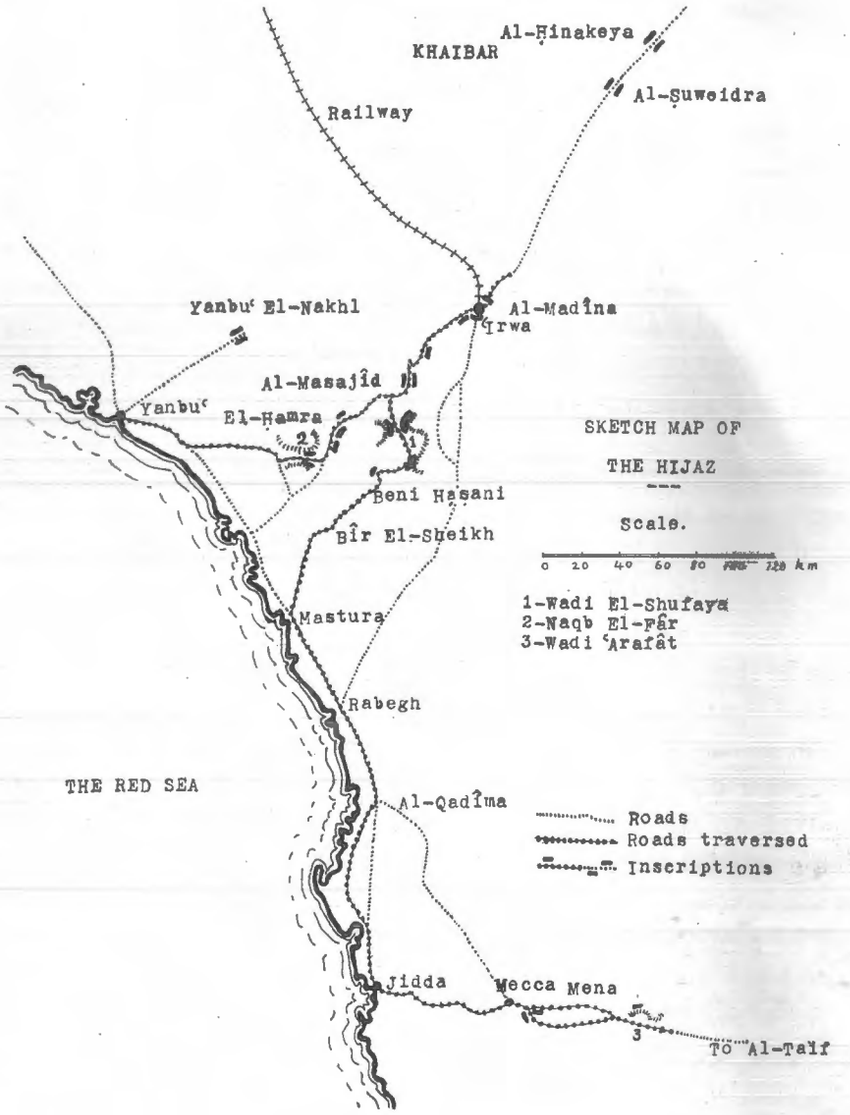
On my second visit (April 1935) we landed at Jidda and after a short visit to Mecca we went to Al-Madîna by the long route. Fortunately we passed through Wadi el-Shufaya (وادى الشفيه) in daytime. This *wadi* is rich in inscriptions but lack of time prevented me from taking any photographs; but I noted their positions so that when I passed there again on my third visit (Nov. 1935-May 1936) I found them easily and made several drawings and photos. (Figs. 7 and 8, pl. II *a* to *e*).

The few inscriptions given here give a faint idea of the number of those which are to be likely found in the central Hijâz.

How the copies and photographs were made.—I stayed at Al-Madîna, on my third visit, six months, interrupted by a short journey to Mecca, for the pilgrimage, when some of the photos were taken en route.

My work[1] at Al-Madîna, during those six months, did not allow of

[1]. I was sent to Al-Madîna to direct the work of reparation and restoration in the Holy Mosque of the prophet, «Al-Haram Al-Nabawi».



Map.

much time or opportunity to visit the places near that town, where. I was told that inscriptions could be seen, and only after my task was accomplished was I able to make short excursions to those places and record some inscriptions in the last few days of my stay. The rest were taken while travelling homeward when I had a comparatively longer time at my disposal to inspect and copy the inscriptions.

My lack of experience and time and being obliged on some cases to rely on a defective camera without being able to make copies have resulted in the regrettable loss of some interesting inscriptions which thus I cannot show, while others can only be reproduced faintly. However, I give some copies which I did my best to make as much like the original as possible.

LOCALITIES IN WHICH THE INSCRIPTIONS ARE FOUND.

1) Al-Madîna and its environs.—Outside the northern gate (الباب الشامى) of Al-Madîna rises a black mountain, Gebel Sil' (جبل سلع). On the western side and in the numerous gorges of this mountain all sorts of inscriptions are cut on the surface of the rock. In some places the surface is covered with them and in others they are superimposed. Most of them are in *Kufi* and other styles of Arabic writing, but I also noticed signs of earlier periods.

On leaving Al-Madîna from the western gate (باب العنبريه) and after a distance of about 3 kilometres the traveller passes Bir 'Irwa (بئر عروه) in Wadi Al-'Aqîq (وادى العقيق) and almost immediately notices a dark cliff on the left of the road. The surface of this cliff exhibits a variety of inscriptions. Arabic inscriptions carefully cut in a very good style can be seen; one of them being written by a grandson of 'Irwa, who owned the well in the early days of Islam. Figure 2 (*a* to *e*) show copies of pre-Islamic graffiti copied here. When I passed this place it was used as a quarry and the inscriptions were in danger of disappearing altogether [1]. Photographs taken here were not successful.

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[1] These inscriptions and others mentioned in this paper were seen and referred to in a book on Arabic calligraphy published at Mecca in 1939.

تاريخ الخط العربى وأدابه تأليف محمد طاهر بن عبد القادر الكردى الخطاط صحيفة ١٩٨ و ٣٠٦ طبع بمكة سنة ١٩٣٩

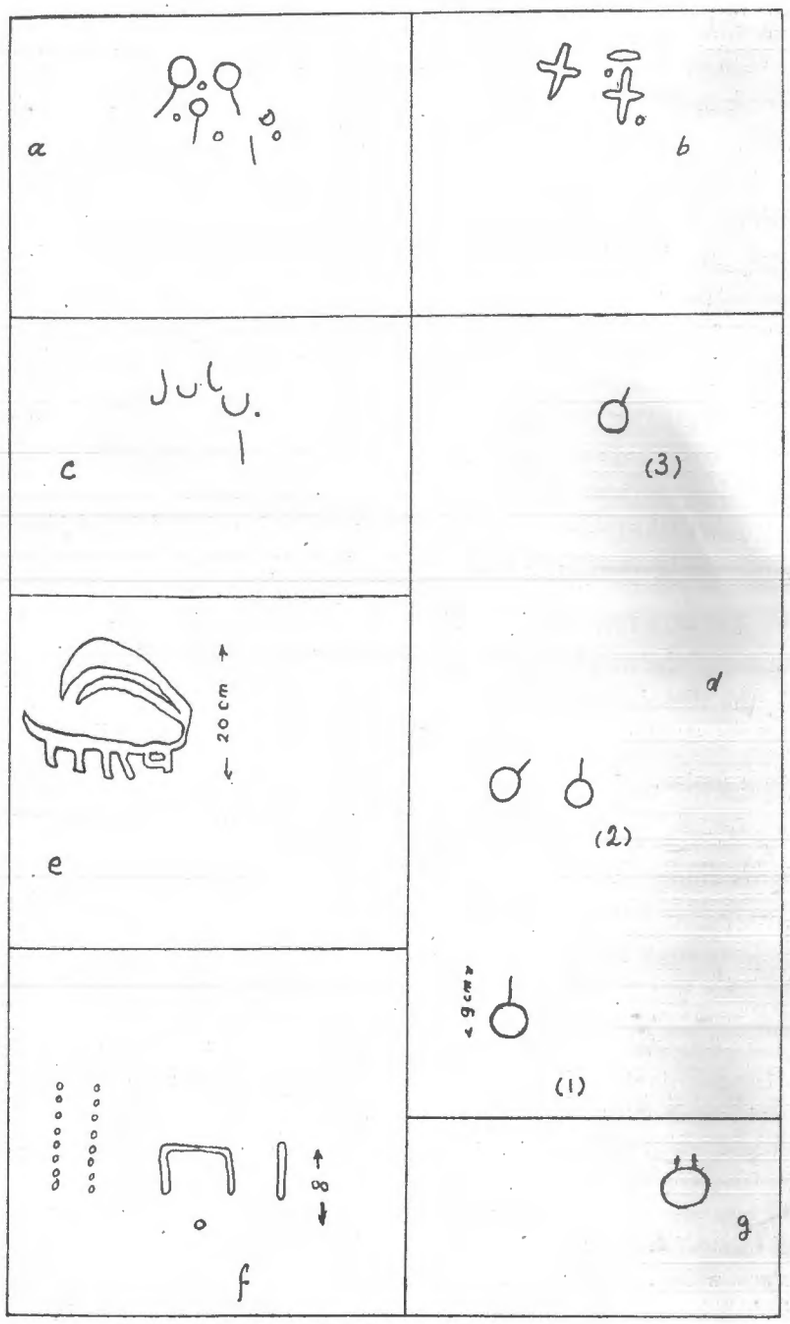

Fig. 1.

Wadi Rânuna (وادى رانونا) is one of the many rainwater courses in the south of Al-Madîna. Three dams [1] were built across the *wadi* from one rock to the other in a place 8 kilometres from the town. The hills round the place are full of inscriptions. I made a hurried excursion to the site and saw, in different places in the road, graffiti of names and drawings of animals, but the inscriptions found near the dams though in early Arabic writing are interesting. They commemorate the foundation of the dams or their reparations; one, in poetry, praising the construction, the scenery and the visitors of the wadi! I can only show copies of some groups of signs observed on a rock near the dam and also a photograph representing wild sheep (fig. 1, *a*, *b*, *c* and *e* and pl. I *b*), but the *wadi* contains many places with inscriptions other than those I saw. Many persons of Al-Madîna know them well.

At Gebel Oḥod (جبل احد) north of Al-Madîna many inscriptions, it is said, can be seen but I saw only one in *Kufi*.

2) The road from al-Madîna to al-Masajîd and to Naqb el-Far.—The positions of the inscriptions, seen on both sides of the road, will be given with the description of each photograph. The inscriptions themselves can be easily detected by those who look for them even while speeding by in a motor.

3) Wadi el-Shufaya (وادى الشفيه).—After leaving Al-Masajîd, going towards Jidda, the traveller traverses a wide plain flanked on both sides

[1] There are several dams like these across wadis near Al-Madîna. The purpose of constructing them was to divert the water into side courses and protect the plantations in the main course. No attempt is made to regulate and use the water held behind the dams. It simply forms temporary lakes which in time dry up by evaporation. The largest dam in Wadi Ranûna (shown in pl. VII) is built of stone without mortar. Two outer walls, built in rough blocks, their largest dimension being about 50 cm., form a casing on both faces. The core is filled with smaller rubble. The dam is about 80 meters long and 7 meters high. At the top it has a width of 4 meters, while at its base it is wider, having sloping faces. Similar dams are found in Egypt and Sinai. See Petrie, *Heliopolis, Kafr 'Ammar and Shurafa, B. S. of Arch. in Egypt 1912*, London 1915; pp. 38-39, chap. xv : *The dam of Wadi Gerrawi :* and Woolley and Lawrence, *The Wilderness of Zin*, London 1936; pl. XXX, pp. 50 and 140.

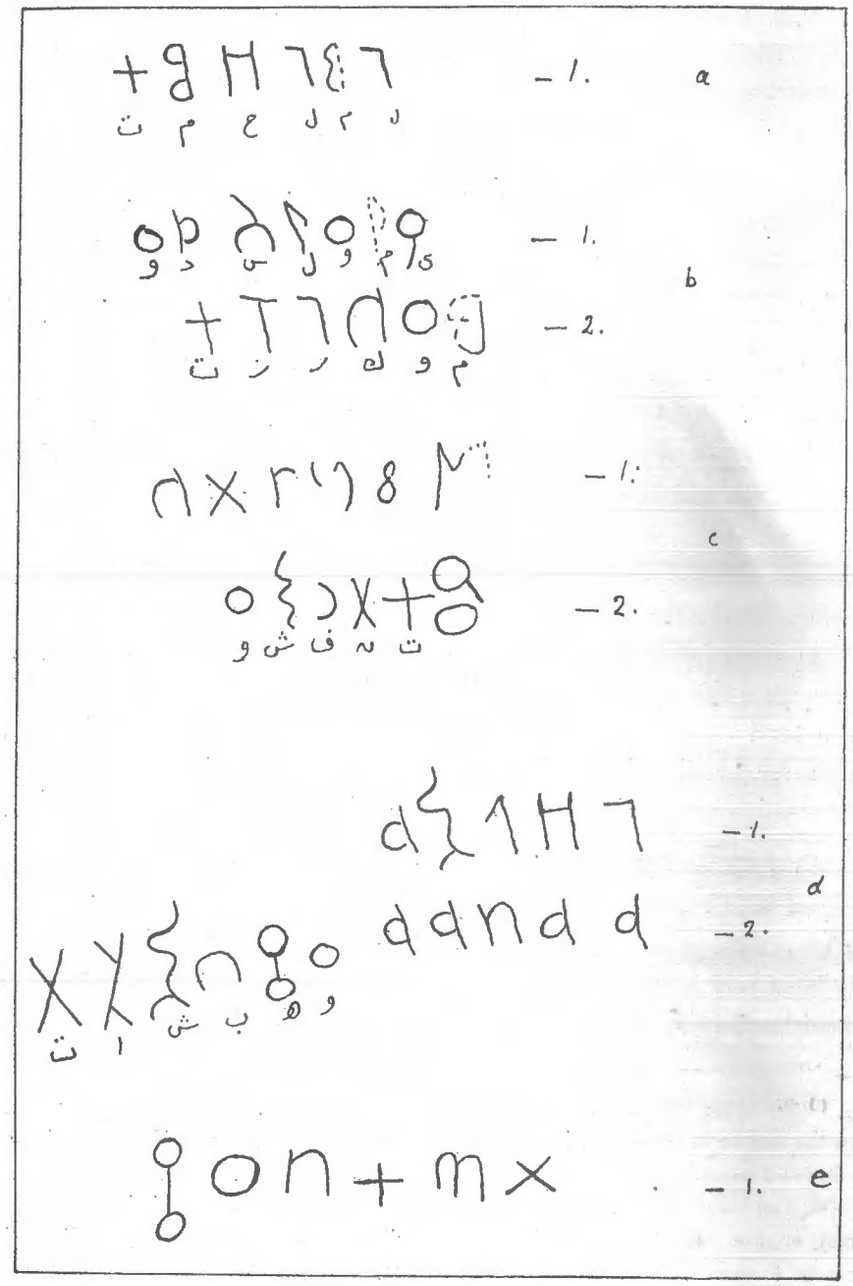

Fig. 2.

by high mountains which are far from the road. It was not possible to notice any inscription here as I had no time to approach the rocks at the foot of the mountains and search for them. A bedawi to whom we gave a lift, told me that the rocks contain writings.

At a distance of about 15 kilometres south of Bir El-Ghanam (بئر الغنم), which is the first halt after Al-Masajîd, there is a drop in the road, which then winds through a narrow gorge between high cliffs, the surface of which is covered with signs, inscriptions and drawings (see figs. 7 and 8 and pl. II *a*). Then we come out of the gorge into Wadi El-Shufaya, which is a sort of very wide depression surrounded by high mountains, which the road traverses centrally; But after passing Bir ʿAbs (بئر عبس)[1] at the southern end, the road turns to the right close to the foot of the mountain at a place where an inscription can be seen (pl. II *b*). The road then passes some plantations on the left. At the end of these plantations, the rock-picture (pl. II *c, d, e*) is found just before leaving the wadi and coming out into the plain.

As fresh water and pasture ground are plentiful here, the wadi presents a site where many inscriptions might be found. The few which I noticed are of ancient signs or letters and not of the Arabic type. However, two lines in Arabic are seen in plate II *d*, but this has apparently no relation to the signs and figures round it and must be of later date.

4) From Bir Beni Ḥaṣâni (بئر بنى حصانى) to Mecca.—After coming out of Wadi El-Shufaya the road traverses a sandy plain, Wadi El-Nâr (وادى النار), where I noticed the signs shown in plate I *a* cut on an isolated rock to the right of the road, a few minutes before arriving at Beni Ḥaṣâni[2].

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[1] Bir ʿAbs; The water of this well, in the middle of the wadi, is unusually pure and sweet.

[2] The bidw deny that they understand or use these signs. This group seems to mark the boundries of Al-Aḥamda territory. To show that these signs are still used to this day, though their original significance may have been lost I give in figure 2 *bis* a collection of signs used to mark water jars of different present day charity societies in Al-Madîna and Mecca, as well as camel-brands which I copied from living animals, and two signs on camel-litters.

From Beni Ḥaṣany to Jidda it was difficult to notice any inscription as the road traverses wide plains of sandy deserts with no suitable surface of cliff or rock for inscribing.

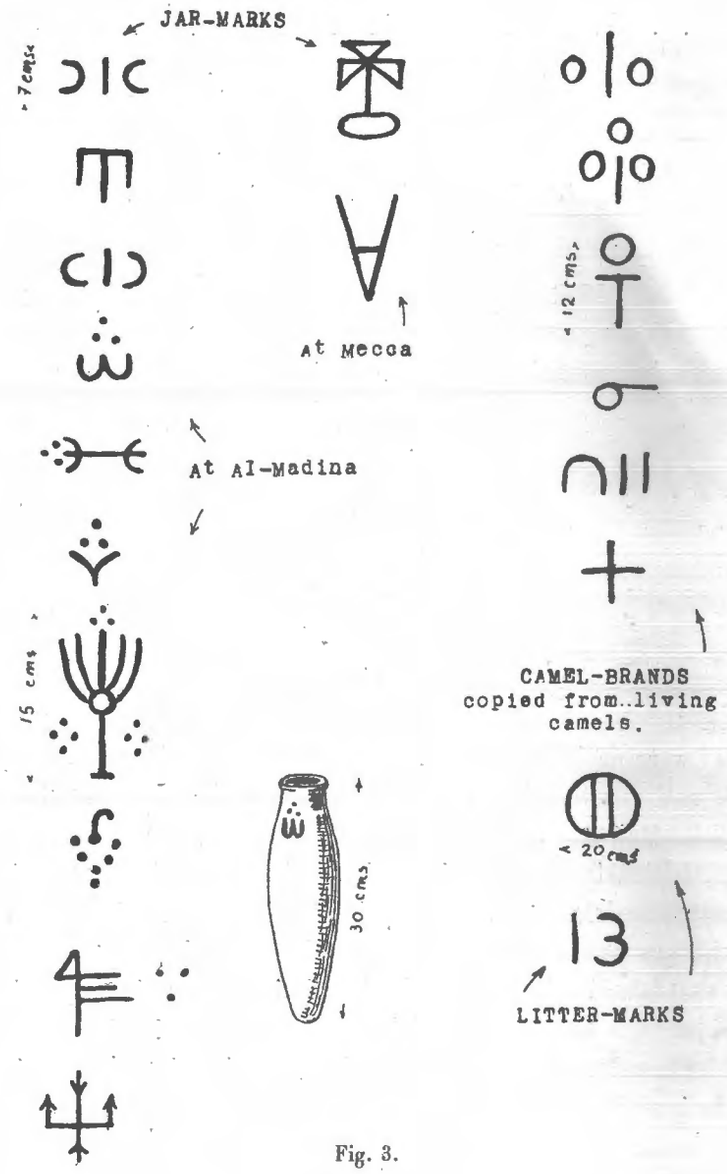

Fig. 3.

From Jidda to Mecca I noticed nothing inspite of a careful look-out during my half-dozen journeys through this road. It would be very surprising if inscriptions cannot be found in the many fertile *wadis* which are reached from this road.

5) Mecca to ʿArafât (عرفات)—Between Mecca and Mena (منى) a lot of inscriptions in Arabic were noticed. A peculiar sign (fig. 1, *f*) was seen and copied at ʿArafât on the western side of Gebel El-Raḥma (جبل الرحمه).

LOCALITIES I HAVE NOT VISITED.

Residents in the Hijâz informed me about places where they saw inscriptions. Photographs or copies were in some cases given to me.

The following are some of these places :

1) Yanbuʿ El-Nakhl is a fertile valley 40 kilometres east of Yanbuʿ with high mountains full of inscriptions. The photographs, pls. V

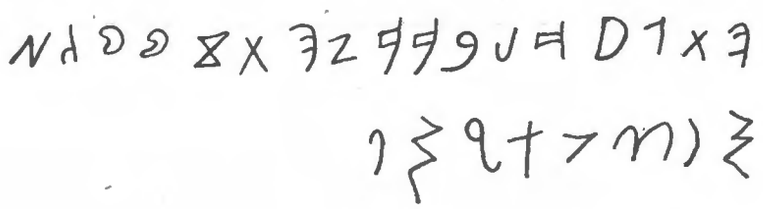

Fig. 4.

and VI were made by Yasîn Eff. Ḥasan of Yanbuʿ who owns land in that valley and, in the time of my voyage, was the representative of the Khedivial Mail line at Yanbuʿ.

2) Al-Ḥinâkiya (الحناكيه) is on the road from Al-Madîna to Nejd (نجد) at about 140 kilometres. El-Sayyid Abd El-Qoddûs El-Ansary told me that he saw many inscriptions and animal drawings cut on the rocks near that place. He copied the inscription shown in figure 4 at Al-Ṣuweidra (الصويدره). I traced it from his copy which he made on the spot. He affirms that this district is full of inscriptions, and it seems that he is right, as I heard the same story from other persons. El-Nekhil (النخل) is another place in the same region containing inscriptions.

3) Many places in the environs of Al-Madîna, such as Bustân Samîha (بستان سميحه), are said to contain inscribed rocks.

4) At Bustân Shahâr (بستان شهار) 2 kilometres south of Al-Tâif old tombstones are found with inscriptions which my informant thinks are in *Rûmi i.e.* Greek, but he also says that some are in *Kufi*, which is more likely.

WHO MADE THE INSCRIPTIONS.

As the two roads were used, from time immemorial, by traders and pilgrims, and since the inscriptions are mostly found on the rocks adjoining the roads it is most probable that these travellers are the authors. Some are, however, found in places far from the roads such as historical sites or near dams or in pasture grounds. In these cases the authors must have been the founders, the visitors or those persons who made reparations to the constructions, or, in the case of pasture grounds, by herdsmen.

THE INSCRIPTIONS.

All inscriptions shown here are graffiti and of seemingly pre-Islamic writing. They are cut in different kinds of signs and exhibit several varieties of style which show that they were made by different peoples and in different periods. Some of them contain figures of men or animals and seem to illustrate incidents of hunting or fighting.

Inscriptions in Arabic will be dealt with at the end.

Serious and systematic study of these inscriptions may furnish a very interesting document tracing the development of Semitic and Arabic writing through their successive periods.

CONCLUSION.

Since it is certain that inscriptions do exist in the central Hijâz in such quantity and variety as to require studying and recording, I hope that this paper has done away with the doubts mentioned at the beginning.

Destructive agents, natural and otherwise, are very active in that country. A record of the inscriptions should be made before they are lost for ever.

Actual conditions in the Hijâz, and the present good relations between our country and the kingdoms of Arabia, present a favourable opportunity to organise an expedition of competent persons for serious research and study not only in the Hijâz but also in other parts of the Arabian peninsula.

O. R. Rostem.

THE FIGURES.

Figure 1:—*a*, *b* and *c* are groups of signs copied from rocks near the second and larger dam in Wadi Ranûna, near Al-Madîna; *a* and *b* are near each other on the same side of a hill containing many inscriptions. This hill can be seen in the photo (pl. VII), in the middle distance to the right.

d—Isolated signs like these are frequently seen on the hill-sides. In one occasion having seen No. 1, and imagining it to be a kind of index of direction I took the direction pointed by the straight line and walked on, traversing ditches and crossing hills, till I came to the group shown in No. 2 after about 100 metres. Continuing in the direction indicated by the two lines I came to No. 3 after about 200 metres. Then I came to a fourth sign after another 100 metres. I wished to follow the search but I was afraid to be lead too far and cause trouble to my companions, who were, at the time, engaged in changing a pierced tyre. These may be signs used by guides to find wells or pastures grounds near the roads. Sometimes this sign has two lines as shown in *g*.

e—Is a line drawing of the animal shown in plate I *b*. The large horns suggest an ibex. This may be compaired with several figures published by Winkler (see page 22).

This picture was seen on a rock near the road from Al-Madîna to Wadi Ranûna.

f—This group of signs was seen on the western side of Gebel El-Raḥma at Wadi Arafât. ⌐ may be a ظ and | a ل; and ⌐ | may therefore be read ظل *i. e.* shadow. The two dotted lines, if this reading is correct, would mark the position of the shadow, in a certain hour, of an object, say a stick, fixed on the rock. Can this be a primitive kind of sun-dial?

Figure 2.—These groups are copies of inscriptions cut on the rock near Bir ʿIrwa and cover together an area of about 2 × 2 ms. of rock-surface, but their exact relative positions cannot be shown as I copied them separately. The height of each letter is about 8 centimetres. In spite of the care I took in copying these letters my unfamiliarity with them may have lead to my making mistakes. Nevertheless they show that inscriptions of this kind can be found near Al-Madîna. Damaged letters are shown dotted, but line 2 in group *c* and the whole of group *d* were quite clear and thus the copies may be considered as fairly exact.

Transcription is very tempting and though I am quite conscious of my limitations in this subject, a trial will do no harm, even if it does not lead to anything.

a—
reading from right to left this would mean «to Malhamat».

b—
reading from left to right this would mean «salutation, Salomi visits you.» Salomi may not be a proper name and would mean simply greetings, which is more probable.

c—
⚲ This sign occurs in many inscriptions and sometimes quite by itself. I imagine it to be a kind of arrow to show direction or position. Figure 1, *d* seems to suggest this. Arabic inscriptions also sometimes contain this sign (see pl. X *a*).

d—The last six letters; if the rendering given is correct would mean «gave a lamb».

e—I found this line in my notes but could not remember where I copied it. So I put it here as the letters are similar to the others.

Figure 4.—This is a tracing made from a copy, by El-Sayyid Abd El-Qoddus El-Anṣary of Al-Madîna, who made his copy on the spot. The original is found at Al-Suweidra near Al-Ḥinâkiya (see map).

Figure 6.—*a*, *b*, *c* and *d* are copies made at Naqb El-Far (see map). Many rocks at the eastern end of this Naqb are inscribed with ancient

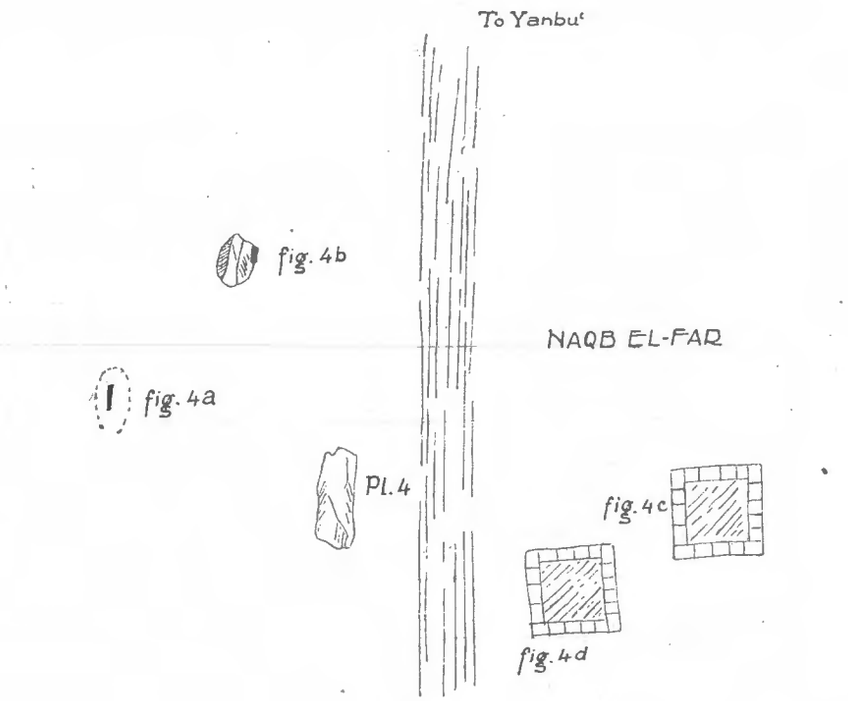

Fig. 5.

signs and drawings. Opposite the boulder shown in plate IV, remains of two square buildings of about 3×3 metres were seen in a very ruined state with only two or three courses of masonry of the outer casing still remaining above the ground level. The core was filled with rubbish. *c* and *d* were engraved on one of these buildings in the position shown in the sketch plan given (fig. 5). *a* and *b* were seen on scattered rocks in the vicinity. The first sign in *a* may be O instead of ⊖. I copied this line when going to Al-Madîna in 1/12/1935.

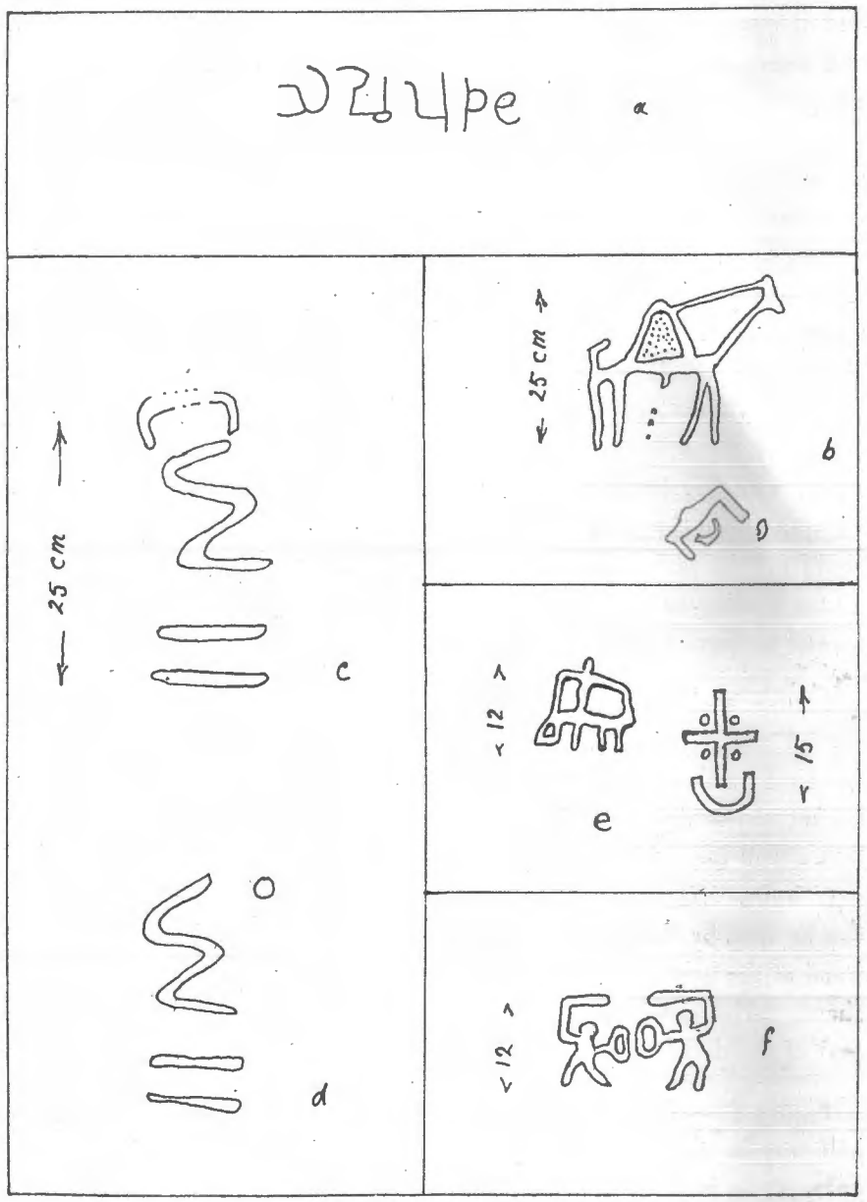

Fig. 6.

Returning to this place after 5 months, in 18/4/1936, I was not able to find it again although I found the others. Heavy rain fell that year and traces of the damage done by the running water was noticeable. The piece of rock with this inscription was probably carried away by the current. *b* represents a camel with a litter on its back, or perhaps a sac full of grain. Litters used by pilgrims nowadays resemble this one. An anatomical mistake may be noticed in the drawing of the camel. *e* and *f* were seen near each other in the road between Al-Masajid and El-Ḥamra (see map). *f* can also be seen in plate II*f*. Two warriors are represented in combat with shields and swords held horizontally above their heads. Notice the symmetry in the arrangement of the figures. Unless one of the fighters is giving the observer his back while the other turns his face towards him, one of them will be holding the sword with his left hand. The height of the figures is about 12 cm. *e* is quite near the group of signs shown in plate II*f* in the top right, but could not be included in the photograph. The figure to the left show a man leading an animal or walking near it. Compare the head of this animal to that of the one showing in fig. 1*e*.

Figure 7.—These signs were seen in the narrow gorge leading to Wadi El-Shufaya. The bedawi to whom we gave a lift explained to me the circle with the long vertical line as meaning a «dilw» (دلو), *i.e.* a bucket, by which water is drawn from wells. It therefore indicated that a well can be found nearby, and in fact I always observed this sign near wells. The bucket used by the bidw much resembles this sign as can be seen by the sketch *c*. It is made of goat-skin and has a cross in wood at the brim to keep it open and when full of water takes a spherical shape. The cross in *a* is the tribal sign of El-Aḥamda who live in this part of the desert (see also pl. II taken in the same district).

Figure 8.—This group was found on the face of the cliff to the left half way in the narrow gorge at a height of about 3 m. above the ground. *a* is a sketch of the whole group done from memory, as I lost the copy made on the spot. The drawing is about 80 × 40 cm. The vertical line of signs which is near the drawing is shown in detail at *b*, which is a facsimile of another copy I still have.

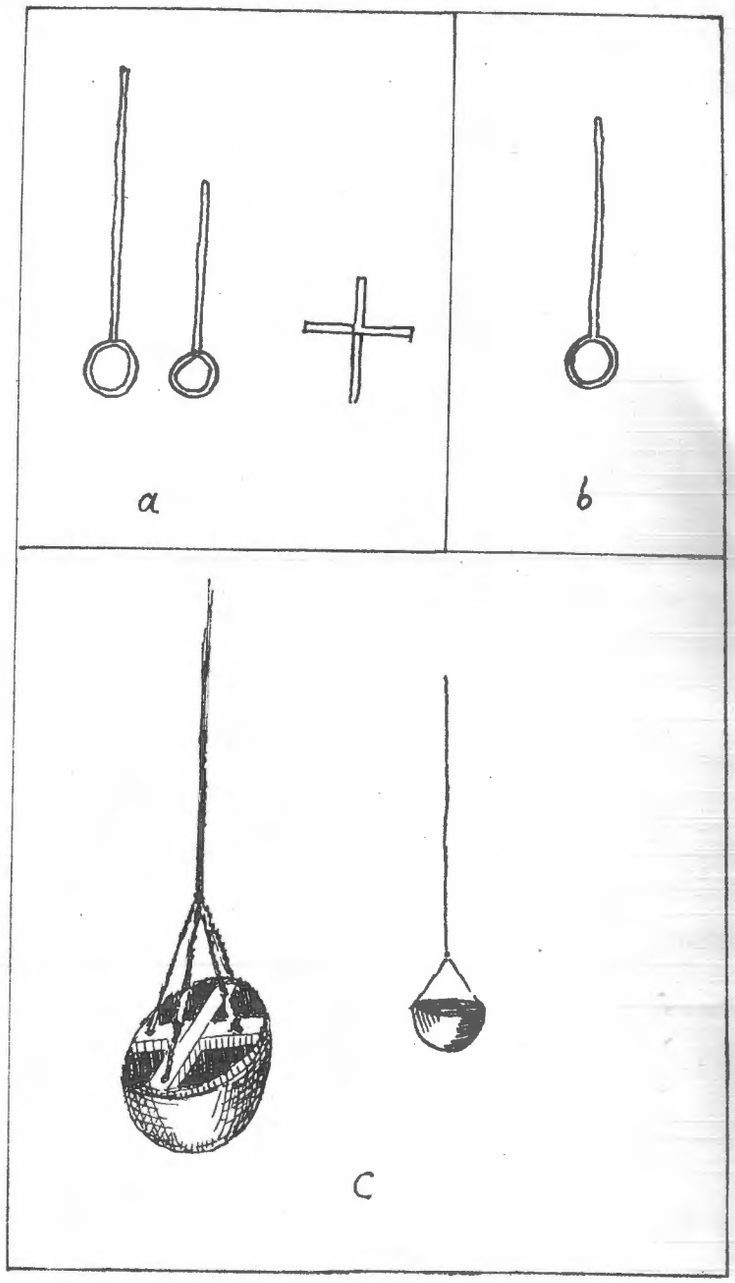

Fig. 7.

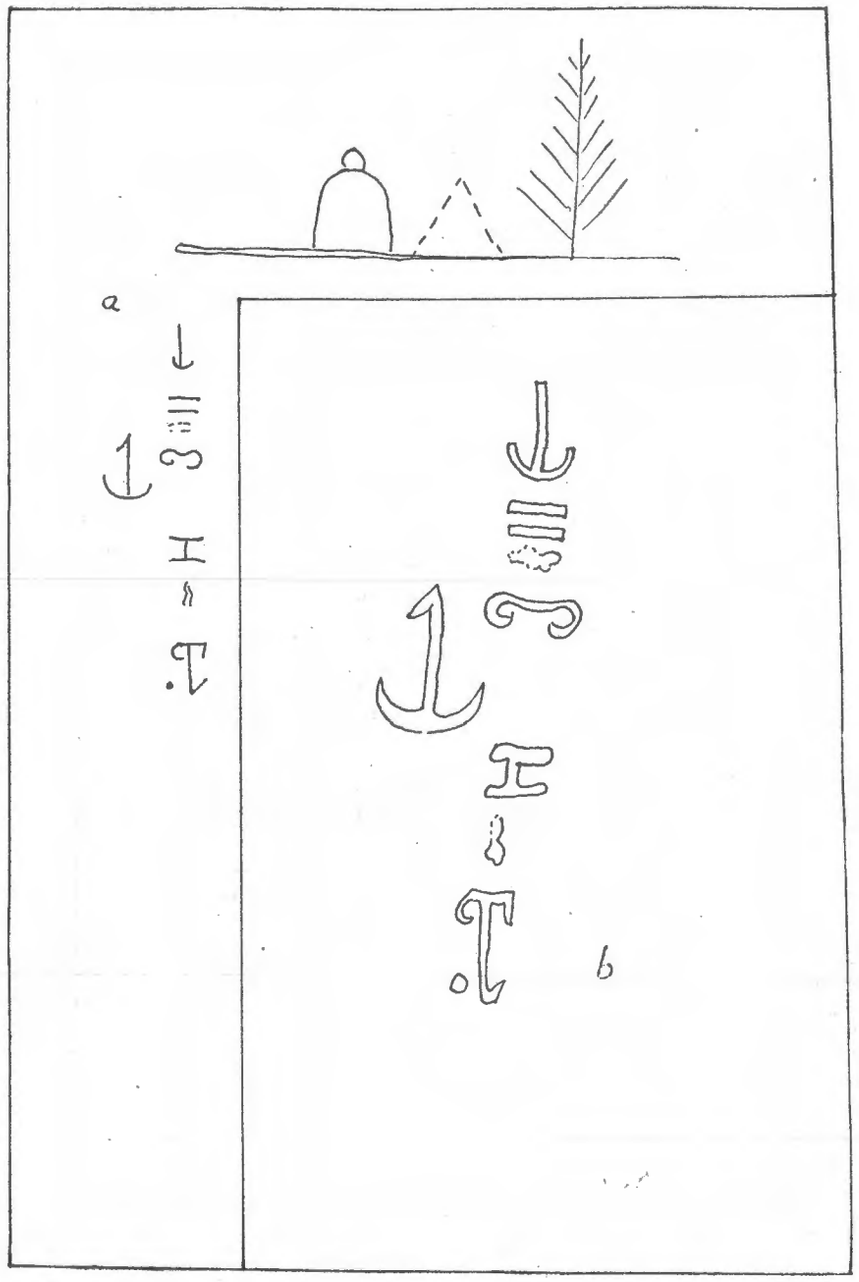

Fig. 8.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

Plate I *a*.—The signs, here shown, have been referred to above (see note on fig. 7; for the cross, and about fig. 1, and fig. 2, *e*, line 2; for the sign ♀). For position of this group see page 8, § 4.

Plate I *b*.—See explanation of fig. 1, *e*.

Plate I *c*.—This shows the same signs drawn in fig. 1, *b*. Here we see again the cross but accompanied with a line and dots. Compare this with the cross in fig. 6, *e*.

Plate II *a*.—This is found to the left of the road after its sudden drop just before enterring the gorge leading to Wadi El-Shufaya. It represents a camel with an object on its back while between its legs and below it several vertical scratches seem to indicate human figures. Under its feet a horizontal line is probably meant for the ground. The height of the camel with the object on it is about 30 cm. The sign ♁ occurs twice in front of the camel. The picture is engraved at a height nearly 4 m. above the ground. As this and the picture shown in fig. 8 are not far from each other and both are cut in an inaccessible place we may assume that the ground-level has fallen since they were made, and this gives them an old age.

Plate II *b*.—This group was seen on the base of the mountain facing Bir ʿAbs at the southern extremity of Wadi El-Shufaya (see p. 6, § 3), at a height of about 1 m. above the ground. To be noticed are the signs +, ♁, ⊥. This last is also seen in other places in the wadi.

Plate II *c, d, e*.—For position see page 8. This is a rock-picture in which animals and human figures as well as signs may be noticed. At *c* the entire group is shown. It will be noticed that the picture is not very high above the ground and some of the signs to the left are half buried in the sand. The larger group shown at *d* is full of life. Two lines forming a T occupy the centre. On its top stands a person with one hand raised upwards and holding a stick, or perhaps a sword, which is more probable as a horizontal line drawn at the person's waist may be

meant for the sheath. To the right and left of the T is the bucket-sign several times. A little above the head of the person is seen an animal, apparently a wolf. Behind this animal the cross-sign is seen twice and then a figure on a camel. Under the camel another figure riding an animal can be seen. I believe this is a horse as the leg of the rider is to be noticed between the legs of the horse and the neck of this is thick and short. Various other figures and signs not quite distinguishable are scattered among those mentioned. At the top to the right and left is seen the sign ⊥ sometimes with one horizontal line and sometimes with two. There is also an Arabic inscription of two lines on the right, a little above the middle. This must be of later date, as the letters are of a lighter colour than the rest. (see pl. IX *d*). In the lower part of *e* is seen an animal with large horns similar to that in fig. 1, *e*.

The rainwater flows from the north end of Wadi El-Shufaya to its southern extremity, washing with it the sand. This explains the high positions of the groups at the gorge (figs. 7 and 8) and also that of the group shown in plate II *c* which is being gradually buried by the sand.

Plate II *f*.—In this picture the two warriors are seen. The other group of signs show no style and seem to be made by a tyro. The position of this picture is between Al-Masajîd and El-Hamra to the left of the track.

Plate III.—These are two photographs of the same stone, which also has figures of persons and animals engraved on a third side. This side being in shadow the photo taken was not successful. At a distance of three kilometres from El-Hamra going towards Yanbuʿ the road turns to the right and begins to rise uphill just after the turn. This stone is seen to the left of the track on the hillside with its inscribed face, shown in *b*, towards the road. (see sketch map; fig. 9) Similar signs as these were seen by Theodore Bent at Sokotra and published in his book *Southern Arabia*, London 1900. There is no apparent connection between the signs. One of them seems to be a hand with the five fingers open.

Plate IV.—This is perhaps the most interesting, from our point of view, of the whole collection of inscriptions, as the characteristic pre-

Islamic letters are seen clearly. A T-sign with a person standing on it, like the one in plate II, may be noticed in the middle top. The bucket-sign is also marked here. The dilapidated condition of the stone menaces its complete destruction. As this stone is found at Naqb El-Far in the middle of the water-course, where another stone was washed

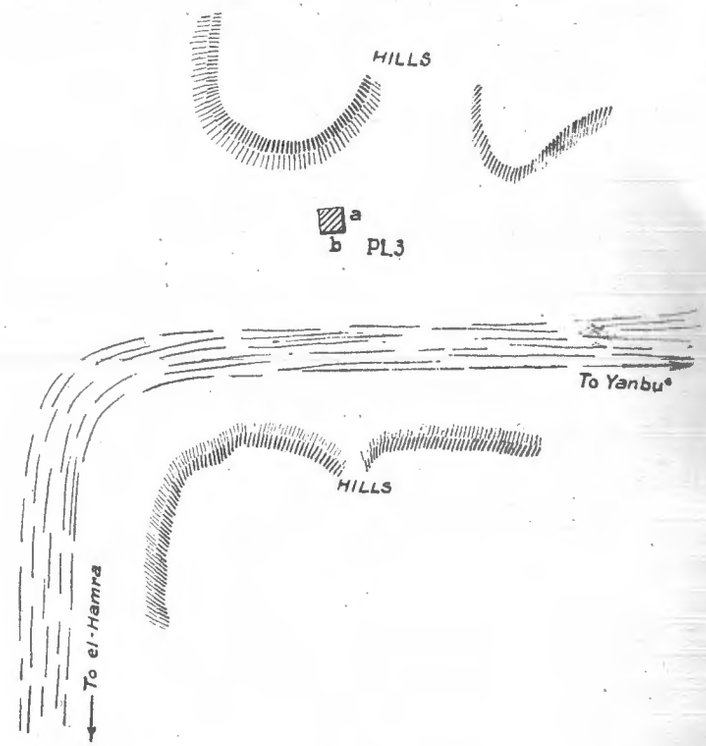

Fig. 9.

away by the current, the same fate may be repeated in an exceptional heavy rain-season.

Plate V and VI.—Yasîn Eff. Hasaan, who was the representive of the Khedivial Mail Line at Yanbuʿ sent me these photographs which he took at Yanbuʿ El-Nakhl. In his letter he mentions a place called Al-ʿEîs (العيص) near the Redwa mountains (جبال رضوه), where plenty of inscribed stones are found.

The following references are given for the sake of comparison :

1 — Dunbar, *The Rock-Pictures of Lower Nubia :*

Pl. XXV fig. 163 may be compared with fig. 6, *b.*

Pl. XIX fig. 92 may be compared with fig. 6, *f.*

2 — Winkler, *Rock-Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt :*

Vol. I :

Pl. IV fig. 2; cross-signs as in figs. 1, *b* — 6, *e* and pl. I *c.*
T-signs as in plates II and IV.
Ibex as in fig. 1, *e.* and pls. I *b* and II.
Camels as in fig. 6, *b.* and Pl. II *a.*

Pl. XIV fig. 1 top centre Ibex as in fig. 2, *e.* etc.

Pl. XXVI Hand-sign as in pl. III *b.*

Vol. II :

Pl. II fig. 2 may be compared with fig. 6, *b.*

Pl. II fig. 1 may be compared with fig. 6, *e.*

Pl. LVIII fig. 2 and Pl. LX fig. 2 with pl. VI.

3 — Winkler, *Bauren Zwischen Wasser Und Wüste :*

Pl. 3 Various signs and figures.

4 — Theodore Bent, *Southern Arabia :*

Appendix IV, with the different figures especially pl. III.

APPENDIX

ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS.

Alongside the pre-Islamic inscriptions, which are the subject of this paper, I found many others in early Islamic and in later Arabic styles. As these are no less interesting than the pre-Islamic I give some examples of what I saw of them; following the same order, as regards places, adopted previously.

Dates are not clear on the early inscriptions, but some of them contain detached letters which, probably, indicate dates, far Arabic letters have numerical values much used in that way. [1] More recent inscriptions are dated. One of them was cut in 1935 A. D.!

Most inscriptions are prayers to God, asking forgiveness and blessing to the writer. As they are found near the roads or in camping places, pious pilgrims must be the authors. Inscriptions found near dams and historic sites celebrate the making of repairs or visits and are sometimes in verse.

1 — Al-Madîna and its Environs :

a — Gebel Sil'—This part of Al-Madîna was used as a camping place by pilgrims from Morocco and North Africa. There is a deep gorge in the western side of the mountain. From a crack in the rock sweet water flows forming a source known as Bir Mohamed or Bir Al-Nâbi. It is believed that the prophet and his friends used to rest here when they were digging a trench to defend Al-Madîna against the hords of Mecca. Thousands of inscriptions are found here. Examples are shown in plate VIII.

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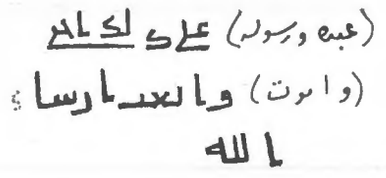
[1] See pls. IX *a* and X *a.*

b — Wadi Al-Aqiq—The same black cliff near Bir 'Irwa, on which was cut the inscriptions shown in fig. 1, contain many Arabic graffiti. The text of one of them cut in beautiful style by a grandson of 'Irwa runs as follows :

1 انا . . . . بن عبد
2 الله بن عروه بن الزبير
3 اشهد الا اله الا الله و
4 حده لاشريك له وان محمد
5 عبده ورسوله على ذلك احيي
6 واموت وابعث ان شا
7 الله

The damaged name of the writer in line 1 can be reconstructed as 'Omar (عمر). It is known that one of 'Irwa's grandsons was called 'Omar ('Omar ibn Abdullah ibn 'Irwa). The ا of Mohamed in the end of line 4 is missing due to the fact that the rock was broken away forming an edge quite near the ends of the lines.

Here is an example of the style of writing as copied on the spot :



c — Wadi Ranûna — In the place where I photographed pl. I*b* many graffiti in Arabic are found. The three examples given here are on hills near the second dam, a little to the north.

Figure 10 : This copy was given to me by a friend of Al-Madîna. I saw the original and the copy gives a good idea of the style. It was read by El-Sayyid Abd El-Qoddus El-Ansary as follows :

1 هضاب بهذا السد بالصلد
2 كله — على كل واد بها
3 جنان من الارض = وان
4 الغوانى لايزلن يردنه —
5 وكل فتى سمح سجيته غض

A sixth line exists and the underlined letters are not correctly interpreted.

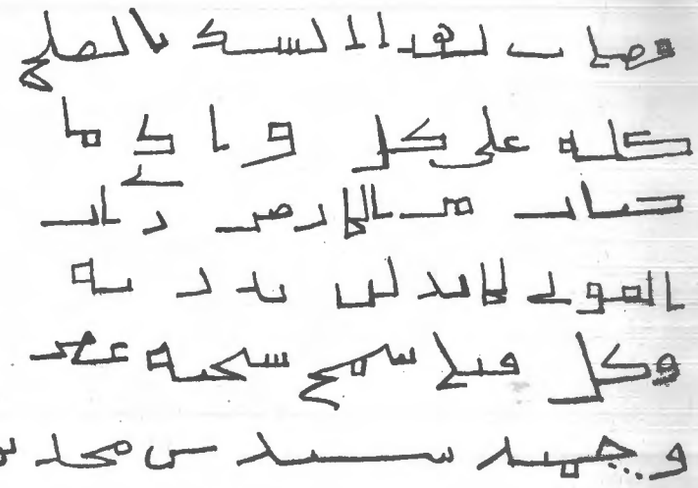


Fig. 10.

Figure 11 : I did not see this inscription. I do not think that the copy is free from mistakes but I give it all the same as it might help to find the original.

The following text is given because it contains a date relating to repairs done to the dam 73 years ago. It is cut on a piece of rock

facing north and superimposed on an older inscription which was smoothed over but can still be seen with some difficulty.

جدد هذا السد باراده الملك المظفر السلطان عبد العزيز
خان سعادتلو شيخ الحرم خالد باشا بنظاره الفاضل محمد صالح
حماد سنه ١٢٨٩ ﻫ بالمدينه المنوره . عمر ازميرى غفر الله له آمين

2 — The road from Al-Madîna to Al-Masajîd and to Naqb Al-Far :

Plate IX *a* : After leaving Al-Foreish (الفريش), 60 kilometres from Al-Madîna this stone can be seen to the left, but if one were coming

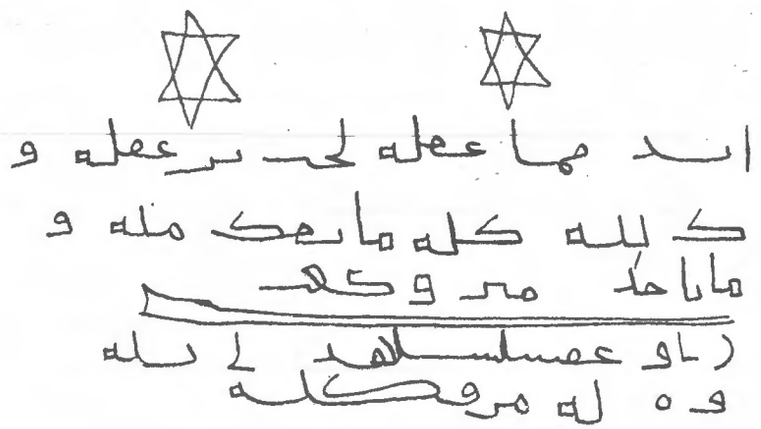


Fig. 11.

from the opposite direction, it would be facing one and could be more easily noticed on the right. It contains two inscriptions, the upper one is read as follows :

1 العلا بن عبد الله بن حكيم
2 يشهد ان لا اله الله وحده
3 ويؤمن بالله ورسله وكتبه

The lower one is damaged in some places. The letters in the lower right-hand corner, separated as they are and composing no word, seem

to me to indicate the date if reduced to their numerical values. Here is what I can read of this text :

1 اللهم عافنى و
2 لا تعـــادنى
3 رب وسلمنى
وكتب يوسف

Plate IX *b* : This is seen to the right after 5 or 6 kilometres from the above and just before arriving at Bir Al-Raha (بئر الراحه). It is cut by two persons in two different styles.

1	الله ولى		
2	المسلمين		
3	وكتبه		
4	سعيد بن	ثقه العلا	1
5	سالم	بالله ربه	2
	a	*b*	

Is "Al-'Ula" in this the same person as in *a*? The style of writing seems to be the same and suggests that both graffitis were cut by the same hand.

Plate IX *c* : After Al-Masajîd going to Al-Hamra the traveller passes through narrow water-courses. The rocks on both sides of the road contain several inscriptions. This is one of them.

The last line may indicate the date but it is neither clear on the photo nor in the original.

1 ... عبد اله
2 عمر بن عما
3 ر امنت
4 بالله
5 ورسله
6 ....

3 — Wadi El-Shufaya : The only Arabic writing I saw in this wadi are the two lines shown in plate IX *d*. They form part of the rock-picture, plate II, but as said before they seem to be of a later date. The first word in line 1 is not clear but it might be read thus.

تاب الله على اسحق بن ابراهيم

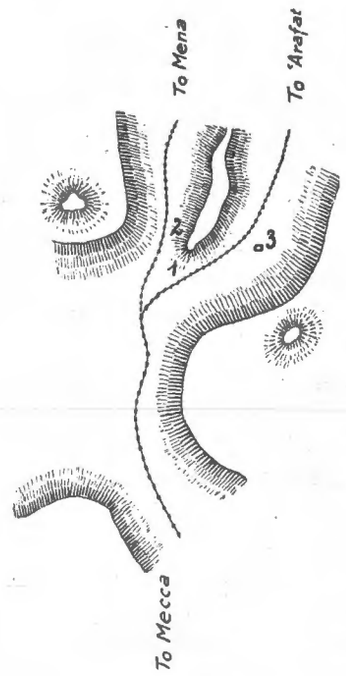


Fig. 12.

4 — Between Mecca and Mena :

The road from Mecca to Mena, after passing the palace of the king of Hijâz, divides into two branches. One branch goes through a pass in the mountains leading to Gamrat Al-'Aqaba (جمرة العقبه) at the beggining of wadi Mena. This portion of the road contains many Arabic inscriptions on both sides. The other branch goes east, passes near Bir Zobeïda (بئر زبيده), and winds on in the valley till wadi Arafat (See sketch map, fig. 12). This is a new road opened recently to be used by motor-cars, the other one being the road used from ancient ages. In the new road I saw no inscription.

Plate X *a* : This was taken at the entrance of the pass. It is, evidently of a very early Islamic date, and can be read thus :

١ صلى الله على نوح
٢ بن مسلم
٣ ١١١ توبا لهما
٤ : حب الله
٥ نوح بن مسلم

The three «alefs» in line 3 were probably meant for figures.

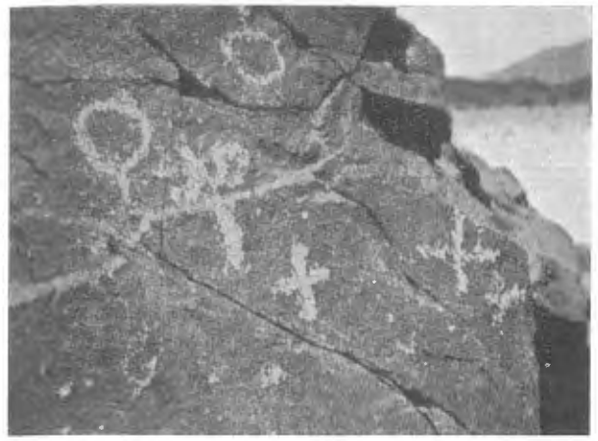
Plate X *b* : This is found to the right of the road in the pass itself. The inscriptions on this stone are cut by several persons and are quite clear on the original, though in the photograph they can be read with some effort. One of them runs as follows :

اللهم اغفر لمحمد بن صلح (صالح)

Plate X *c* and *d* : This stone lies half buried in the sand near a gigantic well known as Bîr Zobeïda wife of Harun Al-Rashid. This well was once the terminal point of the aqueduct built by this queen to bring fresh water from Wadi Al-Nûman, beyond Arafât, to this point whence it was carried to Mecca and Mena. (see fig. 12)[1].

[1] The negatives of these photos were given to M. G. Wiet to be incorporated in one of his works.

a



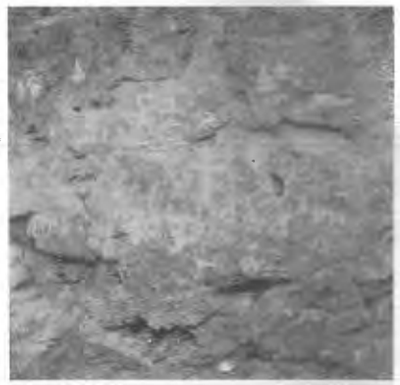
c

b

a

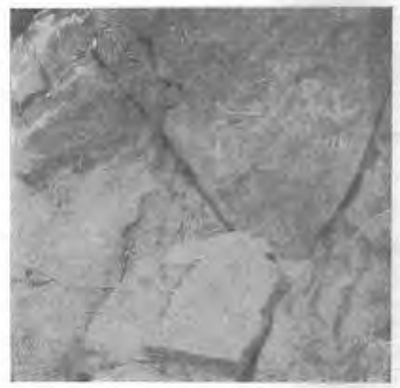
b

c



d

e

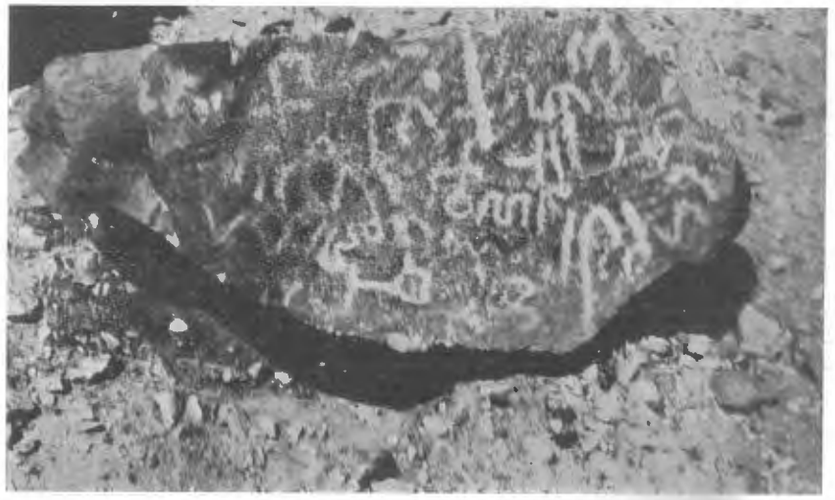


f

a

b

3.



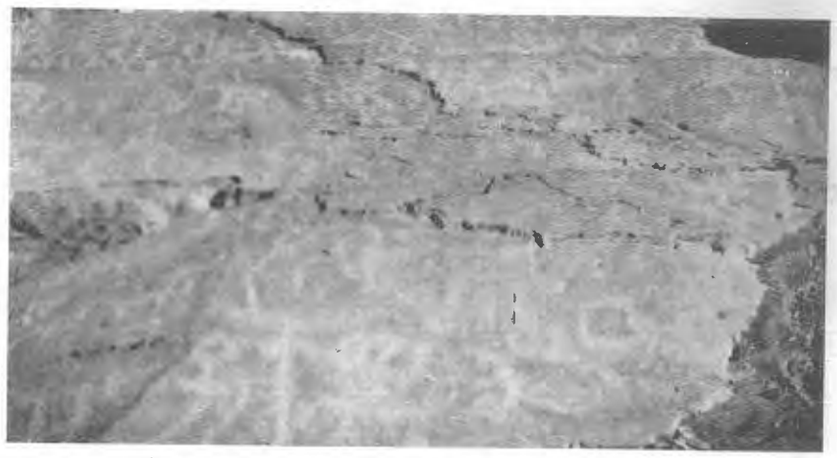
a

b

c

a

b



c

a

b

c

d

c

a

b

d

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